

From: [News and Information about water quality from the Department of Ecology](#)
To: ECOLOGY-WATER-QUALITY-INFO@LISTSERV.WA.GOV
Subject: Department of Ecology continues work on updating the Surface Water Quality Standards
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Ecology continues work on updating the Surface Water Quality Standards

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) continues work on potential revisions to the Surface Water Quality Standards (WAC 173-201A). The standards are the state's primary tool for protecting and regulating the quality of surface waters.

In summer 2012, Ecology plans to propose several changes to the Surface Water Quality Standards (SWQS) rule. These proposed changes will provide predictable regulatory tools to help entities comply with existing and new source control requirements or discharge limits. The changes will allow compliance with requirements while they effectively work toward meeting permit limits and control sources of pollutants.

In response to requests from interested parties, Ecology is developing case studies to help explain how the state would implement the potential changes. The case studies will be the basis of discussion at the spring meetings Ecology plans to hold. The case studies will examine discharge scenarios that include the following:

- 303(d) listed waters.
- TMDL-driven toxics allocations.
- Use of the natural conditions provision in the water quality standards.
- New and existing discharges.
- Compliance schedules and variances.

Ecology originally anticipated completing the case studies by the end of March. The completion timeline was changed in order to consider additional implementation tool options brought forth by interested parties. Ecology anticipates finalizing the case studies and host more public workshops to discuss the proposed rulemaking in late spring 2012.

Ecology is in the process of developing an informational document, referred to as a white paper, about existing surface water quality implementation tools. This paper will also assist with discussion at the spring public workshops.

For information on updates to Surface Water Quality Standards:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/swqs/RuleRev2011.html>

Two Ecology programs are coordinating rulemaking activities

Ecology's Water Quality and Toxics Cleanup Programs are coordinating activities related to updating the Sediment Management Standards (SMS) and SWQS rules. It is important to note that the fish consumption rates used in updating the SMS rule will not necessarily be the same values used in updating human health-based water quality criteria for the SWQS. Ecology will complete work on revising the SWQS to provide updated implementation tools before beginning work on human health-based water quality criteria. At that time, Ecology will again evaluate fish consumption rates. Any changes to the Surface Water Quality Standards will be subject to standard rulemaking regulatory analyses, including cost-benefit analysis.

For information on the coordinated rulemaking efforts: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/toxics/fish.html>

Ecology encourages and welcomes your feedback. Please continue to visit www.ecy.wa.gov for information on these and related issues.

If you have questions about this announcement please contact:

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